

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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SUBJECT: STATUS OF POPULATION CONTROL IN INDIA

REFS: (A) DELHI'S A-141, (B) DELHI 5573, (C) DELHI 5582, (D)
DELHI 6015, (E) DELHI 6365, (F) DELHI 7086, (G) DELHI A-102,
(H) BOMBAY 1187, (I) CALCUTTA 1104, (J) MADRAS 832,
(K) STATE 122628

BEGIN SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM IS A SUMMARY OF NEW DELHI'S
A-141 REPORTING ON THE FAMILY PLANNING EFFORTS BEING MADE
BY THE GOI AND THE STATES AND THE PROBLEMS RELATING TO
COMPULSORY STERILIZATION A MONTH AFTER ANNOUNCING THE NEW
NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SENSE OF URGENCY IN THE COUNTRY CONCERNING

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IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS REMAINS, BUT WAS

JOINED DURING THE MONTH BY A SENSE OF CONFUSTION OVER COMPULSORY STERILIZATION MEASURES. SEVERAL STATES HAD ALREADY FRAMED POPULATION CONTROL LEGISLATION, INCLUDING COMPULSORY STERILIZATION, AND HAD PLACED THEM BEFORE STATE ASSEMBLIES. FOLLOWING THE VIOLENCE LAST MONTH ATTRIBUTED TO CASES OF FORCED STERILIZATION IN OLD DELHI AND CERTAIN OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE HEALTH MINISTER BOTH HAVE VOICED THEIR DISPLEASURE AND STRONGLY EMPHASIZED THAT THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IS "WHOLLY VOLUNTARY" AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE ACTION IF ANY SPECIFIC INSTANCE OF COERCION IS BROUGHT TO THEIR NOTICE.

2. THE GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENTS AGAINST FORCED STERILIZATION HAVE INDUCED RETHINKING IN HARYANA, PUNJAB, AND DELHI, AND THERE IS APPARENTLY SOME RESHAPING AND TONING DOWN OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION ON COMPULSORY STERILIZATION. MAHARASHTRA WILL PROBABLY GO AHEAD WITH COMPULSORY LEGISLATION WHEN ITS ASSEMBLY RECONVENES IN JULY, NEVERTHELESS.

3. GOI HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING LEADERS FEEL THAT THE KEYSTONE OF THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM OVER THE LONGER TERM REMAINS THE INTEGRATION OF HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING, NUTRITION, AND MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH INTO A LOW-COST DELIVERY SYSTEM REACHING EVERY COMMUNITY. THIS LONG-TERM POLICY WILL REQUIRE AN ENORMOUS TASK OF EXPANDING THE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE AT ALL LEVELS IN A COUNTRY WHERE ONLY ABOUT 40-0/0 OF THE POPULATION ARE TOUCHED BY ANY HEALTH OR FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE. MINISTRY OF HEALTH LEADERS REALIZE BEFORE THEY CAN MOTIVATE ELIGIBLE COUPLES TO HAVE ONLY TWO OR THREE CHILDREN WILL HAVE A REASONABLE CHANCE TO SURVIVE AND THAT ADEQUATE MEDICAL AND NUTRITIONAL CARE WILL BE PROVIDED AND CONTINUED. OTHERWISE, THE PROGRAM WILL BE A FAILURE. ABORTIONS WILL ALSO BECOME A MAJOR PART OF THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM. IT IS PLANNED TO INCREASE MINI-STERILIZATION CAMPS AND MORE MOBILE UNITS WILL BE PUT INTO SERVICE.

4. MINISTRY OF HEALTH AUTHORITIES HAVE SET THE TARGET FOR 1976 AT 4.3 MILLION STERILIZATIONS WHICH IS AN INCREASE OF 1.6 MILLION OVER THE STERILIZATIONS PERFORMED IN 1975. ALSO, MANY OF THE STATES HAVE INCREASED THEIR OWN TARGERS ABOVE THOSE SET BY THE CENTER. MOH PUBLISHED FIGURES FOR 1974 INDICATE THAT THE BIRTHRATE PER THOUSAND THE FIRST YEAR OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN FELL OVER 1-0/0 FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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35.6 TO 34.4 PER 1000. IF TRUE, AND WE HAVE SOME RESERVATIONS, THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE GOAL OF 30 PER THOUSAND BY THE END OF THE FIFTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN IN 1979.

5. ANOTHER KEY FACTOR IN THE POPULATION CONTROL STRATEGY IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE-WIDE NETWORKS OF VITAL STATISTICS TO RECORD ALL BIRTHS AND DEATHS. THIS IS NON-EXISTENT IN HALF OF THE COUNTRY. (HENCE OUR RESERVATIONS NOTED ABOVE) THE GOVERNMEBT WILL

ALSO TAKE SPECIAL MEASURES TO RAISE THE EDUCATION LEVEL FOR FEMALES IN THE BACKWARD AND LARGER STATES WHERE THE PERFORMANCE HAS NOT BEEN VERY IMPRESSIVE. THE SUCCESS OF THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN KERALA, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BEEN PARTLY DUE TO THE HIGH LITERACY RATE OF FEMALES WHO TEND TO HAVE LESS CHILDREN.

6. THE GOVERNMENT IS HEAVILY CONCENTRATING ON THE MOTIVATION FACTOR TO MAKE THE POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM WORK. THE ENLISTMENT OF THE

SERVICES OF VILLAGE COUNCIL LEADERS, SCHOOL TEACHERS, MOTHERS, SOCIAL SOCIETIES, LABOR AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS TO SPREAD THE FAMILY PLANNING MESSAGE WILL BE VITAL. MOH OFFICIALS FEEL THAT THE PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO BE CONVINCED THAT WITHOUT A REDUCTION IN THE BIRTHRATE, THE HOPES OF RAISING THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE AND ELIMINATING THE MISERY OF POVERTY WILL VANISH. FINALLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN THE INDIAN COUNCIL FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH (ICMR) AUTHORITY TO GREATLY EXPAND RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF FERTILITY CONTROL WITH THE HOPE OF OBTAINING SOME BREAKTHROUGHS IN ORAL CONTRACEPTION AND FERTILITY VACCINES.

7. EMBASSY COMMENTS: THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY REGARDING THE NEW POPULATION POLICY AND, PARTICULARLY, COMPULSORY STERILIZATION. WHAT DOES COMPULSORY STERILIZATION ACTUALLY MEAN TO THE AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE AT LARGE? THE PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER, PARLIAMENTARIANS, AND MOST GOVERNMENT AND STATE OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY ARE AGAINST FORCED STERILIZATION AND COERCION. YET THEY AGREE THAT SOME ELEMENT OF COMPUSSION IS NECESSARY, PRIMARILY THROUGH INCENTIVES AND DISINCENTIVES. IF THE POLITICAL COST APPEARS TO BE HIGH, WE SUSPECT THE PROGRAM WILL LAG EVEN IN TODAY'S AUTHORITARIAN INDIA.

8. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE PLAYING A WAITING GAME BEFORE MOVING FURTHER, TO SEE THE STATE BILLS EMERGE AND HOW PUBLIC OPINION AC-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CEPTS THE COMPULSORY STERILIZATION POLICY. THE CENTER MUST ALSO ZSTART THE ENORMOUS JOB OF BUILDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT SUCH A POLICY NATIONWIDE. THIS IS WHERE INDIAN WEAKNESS IN IMPLEMENTATION WILL, WE FEAR, SHOW ITSELF.

9. WHETHER ANY SORT OF COMPULSORY STERILIZATION WILL SUCCEED OR NOT WILL DEPEND ON THE RIGHT MIXTURE OF ORGANIZATION, LEGISLATION, AND MOTIVATION AND THE ENLISTMENT OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS, LABOR, PRIVATE BUSINESS, VILLAGE COUNCILS, SCHOOL TEACHERS, AND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE THE PROGRAM. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THERE IS THE NEED OF SUSTAINED POLITICAL COMMITMENT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL IF PROGRAMS ARE TO CONTINUE AND SUCCEED. THESE ARE ALL COMPLICATED ISSUES THAT MUST BE FACED AND WILL BE WATCHED BY THE REST OF THE WORLD.

INDIAN OFFICIALS ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO CRITICISM OF THEIR NA-

TIONAL POPULATION POLICY, PRIMARILY COMPULSORY STERILIZATION AND
ARE WATCHING FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS' AND NEWSPAPERS' OPINION CLOSELY,
PARTICULARLY FROM THE WEST.

10. WE WILL BE CONCENTRATING ON THESE AND OTHER PROBLEMS IN FUTURE
INDEPTH REPORTS AND ASSESSMENTS. END EMBASSY COMMENTS.

11. RESPONSES TO MOST OF AMBASSADOR GREEN'S QUERIES IN STATE
122628 ARE CONTAINED IN FULL TEXT OF NEW DELHI'S A-141. ADDITIONAL
INFO BEING SOUGHT ON ONE OR TWO QUESTIONS AND WILL BE REPLIED
LATER.

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